



# **Emancipation of the West Indies: A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in the Year 1837 (Classic Reprint)**

*Jas A. Thome*

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Excerpt from Emancipation of the West Indies: A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in the Year 1837

It is hardly possible that the success of British West India Emancipation should be more conclusively proved, than it has been by the absence among us of the exultation which awaited its failure. So many thousands of the citizens of the United States, without counting slaveholders, would not have suffered their prophesyings to be falsified, if they could have found whereof to manufacture fulfilment. But it is remarkable that, even since the first of August, 1834, the evils of West India emancipation on the lips of the advocates of slavery, or, as the most of them nicely prefer to be termed, the opponents of abolition, have remained in the future tense. The bad reports of the newspapers, spiritless as they have been compared with the predictions, have been traceable, on the slightest inspection, not to emancipation, but to the illegal continuance of slavery, under the cover of its legal substitute. Not the slightest reference to the rash act, whereby the thirty thousand slaves of Antigua were immediately "turned loose," now mingles with the croaking which strives to defend our republican slavery against argument and common sense.

The Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, deemed it important that the silence which the pro-slavery press of the United States has seemed so desirous to maintain in regard to what is strangely enough termed the "great experiment of freedom," should be thoroughly broken up by a publication of facts and testimony collected on the spot. To this end, Rev. James A. Thome, and Joseph H. Kimball, Esq., were deputed to the West Indies to make the proper investigations. Of their qualifications for the task, the subsequent pages will furnish the best evidence: it is proper, however, to remark, that Mr. Thome is thoroughly acquainted with our own system of slavery, being a native and still a resident of Kentucky, and the son of a slaveholder, (happily no longer so,) and that Mr. Kimball is well known as the able editor of the Herald of Freedom, published at Concord, New Hampshire.

They sailed from New York, the last of November, 1836, and returned early in June, 1837. They improved a short stay at the Danish island of St. Thomas, to give a description of slavery as it exists there, which, as it appeared for the most part in the anti-slavery papers, and as it is not directly connected with the great question at issue, has not been inserted in the present volume. Hastily touching at some of the other British islands, they made Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, successively the objects of their deliberate and laborious study - as fairly presenting the three grand phases of the "experiment" - Antigua, exemplifying immediate unrestricted abolition; Barbadoes, the best working of the apprenticeship, and Jamaica the worst. Nine weeks were spent in Antigua, and the remainder of their time was divided between the other two islands.

The reception of the delegates was in the highest degree favorable to the promotion of their object, and their work will show how well they have used the extraordinary facilities afforded them. The committee have, in some instances, restored testimonials which their modesty led them to suppress, showing in what estimation they themselves, as well as the object of their mission, were held by some of the most distinguished persons

in the islands which they visited.

So wide was the field before them, and so rich and various the fruit to be gathered, that they were tempted to go far beyond the strength supplied by the failing health they carried with them. Most nobly did they postpone every personal consideration to the interests of the cause, and the reader will, we think, agree with us, that they have achieved a result which undiminished energies could not have been expected to exceed - a result sufficient, if any thing could

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